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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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WSDA begins revegetation efforts in Tukwila neighborhood where pest beetle found

OLYMPIA – Work is under way today to revegetate a three-acre greenbelt in the Tukwila neighborhood where trees were removed last summer to eradicate the citrus longhorned beetle. Under the direction of the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), more than 1,000 trees and shrubs are being planted in the greenbelt, a sensitive area of wetlands and steep slopes. In addition, 60,000 square feet of the area will be seeded with native grasses, and five berms and 950 feet of sediment barriers will be constructed to prevent runoff and soil erosion.

The greenbelt is adjacent to the intersection of Macadam Rd. S. and S. 144th St., where up to five of the tree-killing beetles escaped from a Tukwila nursery in the summer of 2001. Approximately 1,000 trees were removed in the summer of 2002 from an area surrounding the site where the beetles escaped. About 75 percent of the trees removed were in the greenbelt or along the I-5 corridor, and about 25 percent were in yards of 37 property owners.

“We've looked forward to getting the revegetation project under way,” said Dr. Brad White, Pest Program manager for the state Department of Agriculture. “Our goal is to revegetate the hillside, reestablish habitat and aesthetic values, and prevent soil erosion.”

All vegetation being planted is native to Western Washington, such as Douglas fir, western red cedar and common snowberry, and is not host to the citrus longhorned beetle. The revegetation plan was prepared for WSDA by an environmental engineering firm and the plants were purchased from Storm Lake Growers of Snohomish. The landscaping is being done by Blue Sky Landscape Services of Puyallup under contract to WSDA and will take two to three weeks. The landscaper will maintain the area for two years (weed, water, and control pests) to ensure successful plant establishment. The U.S. Forest Service is funding the \$45,000 project.

The more than 400 trees and 600 shrubs will be small when planted. The 50 containerized trees being planted are a minimum of three feet tall; the tree seedlings, shrubs and cuttings are a minimum of 18, 20 or 24 inches, depending on the plant. The decision to plant small trees and shrubs was based on cost, availability and survivability.

“When small trees are planted, less damage is done to the roots responsible for the tree's nutrient uptake,” White explained. The trees and shrubs are expected to grow at a rate of about one to two feet a year.

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Other revegetation efforts

Revegetation is also going on in the yards where trees were removed last summer. Property owners who lost their trees received vouchers to use at area nurseries to purchase and plant replacement trees, shrubs or other plants.

“Several of the 37 property owners have already purchased and planted trees with their vouchers,” White said. The vouchers, provided in cooperation with the nursery industry, are redeemable through 2007.

Quarantine and tree survey work continues

Other efforts continue to prevent the citrus longhorned beetle from becoming established in Washington. A plant quarantine, established in November 2001, remains in effect for an indefinite period. The quarantine covers properties within a 1/2-mile radius of where the beetles escaped and prohibits moving wood potentially infested by the citrus longhorned beetle out of the quarantine area. Most deciduous hardwood trees and shrubs in the area are subject to the quarantine.

WSDA crews continue to look for signs of the beetle. Since this season’s survey started last October, WSDA has inspected more than 6,000 trees from the ground and from canopy level in the greenbelt and on residential properties. The goal is to inspect host trees in the quarantine area. To date, no further evidence of the beetle has been found.

Citrus longhorned beetle infests and kills more than 40 species of hardwood trees, such as apple, oak, alder, poplar, willow and walnut.

More information, including a fact sheet on the revegetation efforts, is available on the WSDA Web site at www.agr.wa.gov.

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